influenced the behaviour of nobles for a time, though only in their dealings with women in their own class. Thus, in theory, all women resembled either the exalted Virgin Mary or the fallen Eve and in either case existed outside the day-to-day economic life of men.

The actual position of women was rather different, however. As Eileen Power early discovered and as these essays demonstrate repeatedly, in all social groups, women's education and occupations were more similar to men's and women were much more integrated into the economic life of their milieu than the theory ever envisaged. In normal times, women worked alongside men or engaged independently in a trade or craft of their own. Otherwise, not only did ladies administer the affairs of the manor while their lords were at war or on crusade, but in the absence of other men, women could replace their husbands in business, trade, the crafts or agricultural tasks as well. In widowhood and also in spinsterhood, though less often, women from all parts of society took over masculine functions, including those of the professions. Even nuns, though they played a diminishing part in education and business during the later medieval centuries, participated in worldly affairs. In brief, women enjoyed a central place in the economy and a practical equality with men which arose from the mutual economic dependence of the two sexes.

These essays are delightful to read. They are as lucid and witty and are based on as wide a variety of sources as any of Eileen Power's other writing. Moreover, they have been elegantly published with appropriate contemporary illustrations throughout the book.

D. G. THOMPSON,
University of New Brunswick.

* * *

VINCENT J. KNAPP. — *Europe in the Era of Social Transformation: 1700-Present.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976.

For Vincent Knapp, whose book purports to offer an explanation of Europe's transformation from an agrarian society dominated by aristocracies into an industrialized and urbanized one controlled by technocrats and bureaucrats, who have introduced various forms of social welfarism to deal with problems which are almost exclusively economic, social history is a new disciplinary weapon. His use of it turns it into a rather limp version of naive economic determinism. At no time in his survey of Europe's social and economic history from the eighteenth century to the present is he concerned with the problem of defining or conceptualizing social class; whether it is appropriate to employ class as a term in the pre-industrial period; what heuristic or other value there is in talking about an élite; and what relationship there is between the latter and class. Mr. Knapp evidently believes that these are self-explanatory in his delineation of social groups into upper middle, middle middle, lower middle, working (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled), peasant (proprietor, middle, and landless), and so on. They require no analysis because apparently simple description of what elements of the population fall into each of these categories will perform the needs of the social historian and respond to the realities of social differentiation. But there is more (or less) behind the blandness of his approach, and these are the Bobbsey twins of industrialism and urbanism which appear as delightful performing puppets who, in the twinkling of an eye, spark social and economic change, cause a bit of discomfort, retire from the scene, and leave all of us in the advanced industrial societies with the know ledge that change is aberrant and that continuity is the permanent feature of history.

The study is then a curious anachronism, despite Mr. Knapp's assurance that it lies in the midstream, indeed represents the advance guard, of modern historical research. The major historical and sociological controversies which have engaged scholars for some considerable time find no mention in his book. He does not even justify his approach, why he feels it necessary or desirable to escape from system or theory. He merely takes it for granted that readers are willing to accept an account devoid of explanatory purpose and bask in the contentment of reading about the displacement of the old by the new and the concomitant improvement of the standard of living for all groups and the certain solution of contemporary problems, such as environment protection, by technological progress. Not only will the uninitiated student for whom this book is probably designed derive no notion of the dynamics and processes of change, the complexities of which troubled thinkers from Marx to Weber, as well as their progenitors and their followers, they will also be deprived of the contributions made by Landes, Moore, the French group of demographic historians, and the various groups of historians on both sides of the Atlantic who are producing important monographic studies and grand syntheses of European society undergoing vast and unprecedented changes. To be sure, he claims to tell us of them, but his bifurcation of explanation and event, or rather his annihilation of the first and his enthronement of the second, is a superb example of the triumph of unrestrained empiricism. The book labours, moreover, under an additional artifice, which imputes to only one class, the dominant ruling class, whether in traditional or industrial Europe, any sense of political awareness and political power. He allows the classes below them, particularly the working and peasant sections of society, only a brief period in which to assert their claims within prevailing political structures, as if the economic and social aspirations of these groups were asserted without some knowledge of and desire to challenge them. For the most part, we are told, suppressed social classes responded to economic need and deprivation alone and gave no thought to anything but their physical needs. Social conflict, in Mr. Knapp's view, was reduced to the level of brute force uninformed by existing patterns of behaviour, productive, as we know, of complex and varied forms of political expression which were modified and were changed to meet new situations. Similarly, his discussion of the standard of living question contains no hint of the real problems embedded in the period of industrial transition, which continued for a much longer period than he allows, since his obfuscation of the different periods, phases and processes of industrialization as between western and eastern Europe (just to mention two major geographic areas) permits him to write blithely and confidently about steadily advancing improvement with no appreciation of the human cost involved. Bourgeois ascendancy is likewise treated as a species of universal invariable, hardly or only slightly affected by and related to the powers of states, the weaknesses or strengths of the landed nobilities, and movements from below.

Thus we are confronted with the emergence of a "new middle class" by the last quarter of the twentieth century, similar in outlook, patterns of life, and positions of power in both the countries of the Soviet bloc and in the economic and political configurations of the west. Europeans have now merely to relax in their ever-increasing standards of physical comfort, for poverty has been banished, social conflicts will be handled by the middle class power élite, economic upsets will be smoothly handled by manipulative techniques born of the computerization of society, and stability will at last be achieved. For this is the message of the book, which, as it reaches its ultimate pages, reads more and more like a travel tour catalogue of the sights of the new heaven, imperfect in detail but generally quite marvellous. Completed presumably at a time when the foundations of post-industrial European society are experiencing the extraordinary strains of inflation, unemployment, power shortages and political instability, the book guides us

through these dangerous shoals only because they are not mentioned. Occasionally Mr. Knapp shows some awareness of the implications of his linear view of history, but in the main he is totally committed to its distortions and its simplicities.

Harvey MITCHELL
University of British Columbia.

* * *

HANS-ULRICH WEHLER, ed. — *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg 1524-1526* (Sonderheft 1, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft, Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft*), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975.

The year 1975 was probably a turning point in the historiography of German social history written by both East and West Germans since the Second World War. For the first time there was the possibility of a certain amount of consensus growing between hitherto antagonistic sides, which is reflected in this collection of essays from ten West Germans, one Canadian and one American. It seems that both East and West now appreciate that the Peasant War of 1525 is the starting point of a common German tradition of 'underdog' or democratic history. Conferences and *Festschriften* commemorating its 450th anniversary marked for many scholars the turning point in a cold war between marxist-leninist and western-liberal viewpoints. The East Germans were allowed to attend at the Swabian town of Memmingen, from where the famous Twelve Articles of the rebellious peasants had originally been promulgated by the rebels, and both sides read papers to each other about the events of 1525.[1]

But perhaps even more important is the above compendium edited by Wehler, which combines research techniques of our western positivist school of history with the ideas of the East Germans and their mentors, Marx and Engels. Although the collection loosely covers aspects of one particular civil war which effectively lasted only three years, and which failed to bring about any obvious change in German politics and public life, it marks a turning point in East-West German academic détente.[2] History and historiography are fruitfully combined, and the study that will make these events for the first time available to English speakers is now awaited.[3]

The last essay in the Wehler collection (pp. 303-354) is a useful bibliographical survey of some 300 new books and articles that have appeared in both Germanies in the last decade concerning the sociology of the 1520s above all in the southwest, Alpine, central and east-central German territories of the Holy Roman Empire. These works have established without doubt that what is traditionally called the German Peasant War of 1525 was the centre-piece of a political upheaval every bit as important as were in their ways the Revolt of the Netherlands, the English Revolutions of the seventeenth century, the French Revolutions of 1789 to 1871, and the Russian and continuing Chinese events of the twentieth century.

[1] P. BLICKLE, ed., *Revolte und Revolution in Europa* (Neue Folge, Beiheft 4, *Historische Zeitschrift*), (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1975).

[2] Much of this was already signalled in R. WOHLFEIL ed., *Reformation oder frühbürgerliche Revolution?* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlag, 1972). From now on social historians of Germany who disregard the East German *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* will do so at the risk of becoming totally obsolete.

[3] Janos BAK, ed., *The Peasant War of 1525 in Germany*, which is to be published as Part 1, Volume 3, of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, and as a separate paperback by Frank Cass, London.